

Spring 2024



GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2024

PRODUCED BY **THE FARMERS' UNION OF WALES**





A word from our President

It is now more than 3 years since the UK officially departed from the European Union, and the period that has followed has marked an unprecedented time in UK politics. During the referendum, Brexiteers painted the withdrawal from the EU as a simple process, which would free the UK of burdensome regulation and outdated policies, and which would open the door to a new world of

new trading partners. The pro-Brexit campaign largely centred on allowing the UK to forge its own path, 'taking back control' in a way which would quickly see tailor made

domestic policies, and trade deals that set us free and throw off the shackles of restrictive and costly EU red tape.

Sadly, what has unfolded since the May 2017 election has been a far cry from this ideological portrait of life outside the EU, confirming that Brexit should have taken place over a safe and realistic timescale, and that Brexit outcomes, such as striking new trade deals, should only be struck when the livelihoods of domestic producers have been properly considered and protected.

I make no apology for staunchly supporting the Union's view, that the rate at which the Government sought to implement

the outcome of the EU Referendum has represented anything but a smooth transition, and that political priorities have been placed firmly above the interests of UK business and industry.

As an industry, we now find ourselves looking at agricultural support schemes across the UK, that value 'public goods' and 'natural capital' over food production and a flow of imports that do not meet the high standards of our own domestic producers.

Whichever party is elected to run the next UK Government, they must strive to repair the damage done by rushed through trade deals, which have led to an unfair and uncompetitive post-Brexit trading environment. Politicians must be honest with us about the timescales needed to make changes that honour the vote to leave the EU, while also respecting the majority who opposed leaving without acceptable trade agreements.

The FFW believes the UK deserves to see food continuing to be produced on our land, to the high standards we hold dear, and on family farms which are the economic, cultural and environmental backbone of our landscapes.



With the issue of rural funding and trade deals remaining a key focus of current election campaigning, this manifesto portrays the FFW's policies on how our future relationship with the EU and the rest of the world should develop.

It also deals with other matters of central long term importance to our industry, such as climate recovery, tackling bovine TB and public procurement.

Since 1977 the FFW has been formally recognised by Governments as representing the views of farmers in Wales. We have no influences from outside Wales, so we speak exclusively on behalf of Wales' family farms. As a neutral organisation not affiliated to any

political party, we have a duty to work with politicians of all persuasions, to bring about the best outcomes for Wales' family farms.

The role agriculture plays in protecting our natural environment and rural communities, coupled with the importance of maintaining and strengthening those political frameworks which protect our food security, mean agriculture, and in particular the family farm, should be high on the agenda for any future Government.

Ian Rickman

FFW President



FFW KEY ASKS



- 1 Fair Funding for Our Rural Economy
- 2 Future Proofing International Trade, Immigration and a Level Playing Field at Border Control
- 3 Recognise and Invest in Agriculture's Contribution to Climate Recovery
- 4 Protect our Livestock and High Welfare Standards
- 5 Reform Public Procurement and Supply Chains

FAIR FUNDING

for our rural economy

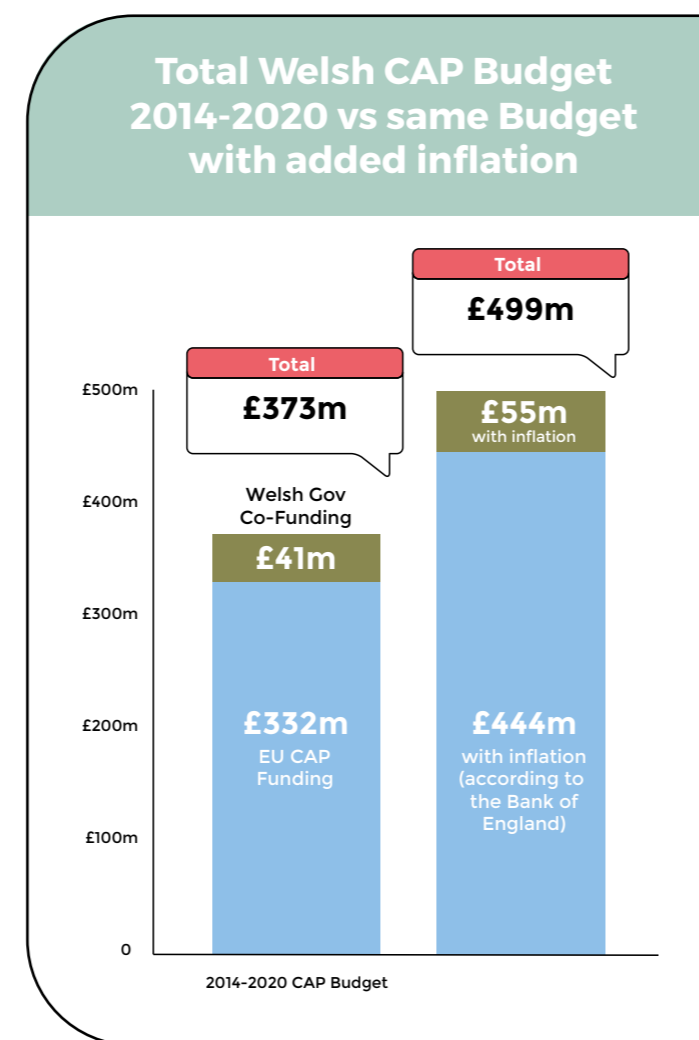


Rural economies and policy cannot function without a fair funding allocation. Agriculture is the foundation of the rural economy and governments must recognise the critical position that farming and agriculture plays in underpinning Wales' wider economic structure.

Ahead of our exit from the European Union, Ministers in Westminster repeatedly assured the FFW that funding delivered through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) would not be reduced. The FFW made it clear to them that national budgets needed to remain multi-annual, at least at current levels, and should be protected to prevent money from being diverted elsewhere. Without this, there are major concerns that rural budgets will be subject to disruptive and damaging annual variations.

Between 2014 and 2020, Wales received around £332 million per year in EU CAP funding with an annual top up of around £41 million from Welsh Government (Co-Funding). This meant that the total annual Welsh CAP budget equalled around £373 million.

Funding from Pillar 1 and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) came to an end in January 2020, when the UK finally left the EU. This meant Wales became dependent on replacement funding from the UK Treasury in Westminster. The 2019 Conservative Manifesto stated "We will guarantee the current annual CAP budget to farmers in every year of the next Parliament".



However, by 2025, Wales will have received around quarter of a billion pounds less in funding for agricultural and rural development than could have been expected had the UK remained within the EU. Annual EU CAP legacy funding allocated by the UK Treasury should now total around £450 million when taking inflation since the 2014-2020 EU CAP budget was allocated in 2013 into account, meaning that in real terms Welsh agriculture has been subjected to vast funding cuts.

Farm Business Survey figures show that the average Welsh farm injects upwards of £100,000 per year into the wider economy, supporting an array of secondary and tertiary business, not necessarily dependent on agriculture.

Family farms continue to be the social and economic backbone of rural areas and continue to generate income for communities despite current inflationary pressures.

An important way to foster rural investments is by supporting agricultural research and development.

Alongside improving efficiency and reducing costs, technological advancements are imperative if the UK is to meet domestic and global targets on climate change and feeding an ever-expanding population. By 2050, we will need to produce 60% more food to feed an estimated 9.7bn people. These responsibilities underline the real need for significant public investment into agricultural research, not just in lowland areas, but

covering all types of UK farming. Commercially driven developments also have clear economic and environmental benefits.

Both lowland and upland areas have a key role to play in producing food, as they have done for thousands of years and policies that have reduced the agricultural viability of upland areas have been shown to have had little, and often detrimental, impacts on ecosystems.

THE AVERAGE WELSH FARM INJECTS UPWARDS OF £100K PER YEAR INTO THE WIDER RURAL ECONOMY

£100k
per year

There needs to be an increase in funding for agricultural research into upland farming, with a particular emphasis on upland crops, restoring pasture productivity, and transferring technology developed for lowland arable systems.

While the private sector plays an increasingly important role in meeting the investment gap caused by cuts to public funding, the industry cannot be forced to rely on this unpredictable funding source. Research priorities and technological developments have naturally become profit driven, and this may not necessarily be in the overall public interest.



FUW KEY ASKS



- 1 Allocate at least £450 million per year in protected funding for agriculture and rural development in Wales.
- 2 Protect farm incomes with a fair funding formula across the devolved nations.
- 3 Increase research in all areas of agriculture and use this to take a more scientific approach to policy making.

FUTURE PROOFING

International Trade, Immigration and a Level Playing Field at Border Control

In Westminster there has been a political drive to hastily put together post-Brexit trade agreements. This has created a trade environment that disadvantages many of our industries, including primary food production.

Current trade deals with New Zealand and Australia highlighted concerns that the UK Government has opened access for food produced to health and welfare standards that would be illegal in the UK. These imports could risk UK human and animal health and could lead to an increase in global and local environmental damage.

Our agriculture and food industries are completely interlinked, and employ 3.5 million people in the UK. The impact of liberal trade deals that opened the floodgates to imports, could be catastrophic for UK producers, standards, and those secondary and tertiary businesses which rely on primary production.

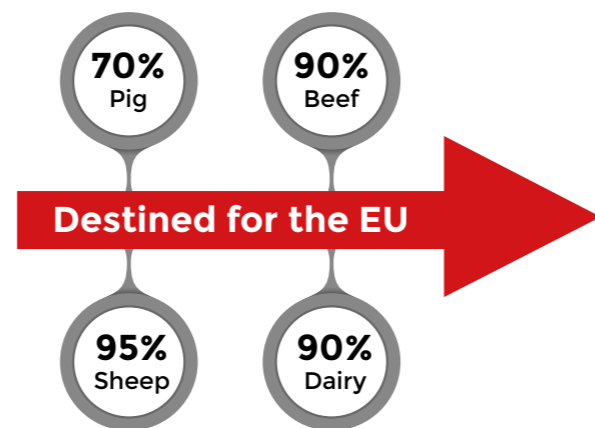
OUR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD INDUSTRIES EMPLOY 3.5 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE UK

3.5M

While Brexit did provide the opportunity to access new markets, Governments need to be realistic about the scale of such opportunities given past experience in trying to gain access, and expand in, non-EU markets. As an industry, Welsh farming is particularly vulnerable to losing access to the mainland European markets on our doorstep, as over a third of Welsh lamb is exported to the continent.



Despite the UK being a net importer of food, our food supply chains extend across the EU, with processors relying on EU export markets to minimise waste and add value to produce. For example, EU markets account for 70% of pig, 90% of beef and 95% of sheep meat exports, while around 90% (£1.3 billion worth) of dairy exports are destined for the EU market each year.



In August 2023, the UK Government confirmed a delay to border checks on food coming from the EU, for a fifth time, but there have been full controls on UK produce entering the EU for over 3 years. Whilst full border

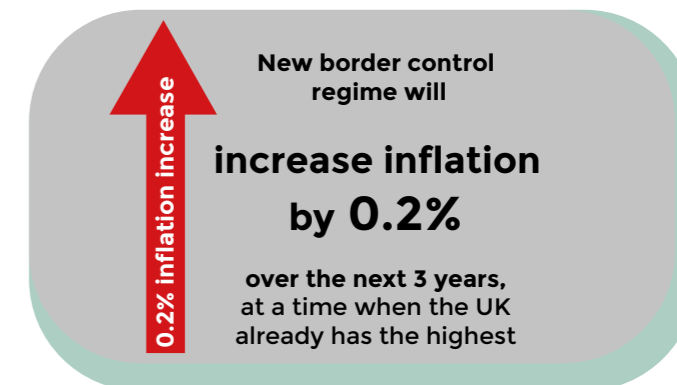
checks are expected to be introduced during the course of 2024, these delays not only represent an unfair and unequal trading environment, they have also caused additional pressure on UK businesses, compounding the effects of increased costs caused by red tape and bureaucracy, and a decrease in supply of goods to the EU. Additionally, the UK Government says their new border control regime will increase inflation by 0.2% over the next 3 years, at a time when the UK already has the highest inflation rate in the G7.

The FFW stresses that proper controls are vital to prevent disease outbreaks that impact human, animal and plant health, the safety, quality and biosecurity of our food products and the confidence of our trading partners.

In conjunction, immigration policies must address the needs of UK farming and food sectors. The UK food industry is increasingly reliant on overseas workers. While farm production is often associated with workers employed under the Seasonal Worker Scheme, much of the work undertaken throughout the supply chain is in fact highly skilled, and often carried out by individuals who have been resident in the UK for many years.

The UK Shortage Occupation List takes no account of occupations integral to primary

production, which will no doubt increase the difficulties already faced by farms struggling to hire staff. Skilled workers include dairy workers and those employed in the food processing sector, including veterinary inspectors in slaughterhouses. According to the Food Standards Agency, 95% of veterinary inspectors come from outside the UK, mostly from the EU. Similarly, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) data shows 25% of veterinarians working in private practice come from the EU, EEA or EFTA.



Access to skilled and unskilled workers from outside the UK is essential, and it is highly concerning that the Home Office proposes to restrict immigration using a definition of 'skilled workers' based on a salary that is potentially well below that of many of the highly respected individuals working in our supply chains.

FUW KEY ASKS



- 1 Abandon liberal trade deals and bring in deals that protect UK markets and food producers.
- 2 Forge international trading arrangements that benefit primary producers, prioritising negotiations with the EU.
- 3 Equal customs checks and tariffs that are properly enforced.
- 4 Regular reporting of statistics on imports, inspections and tariffs charged.
- 5 Include roles essential to primary production on the Shortage Occupation List.

RECOGNISE AND INVEST

in Agriculture's Contribution to Climate Recovery

The farmed environment, and the landscapes and environments it creates, continue to define our national identity and improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the UK population. Agriculture has consistently reduced its emissions and strives for industry improvement, yet we are often shouldered with the responsibility of fixing the climate emergency for the whole of Wales.

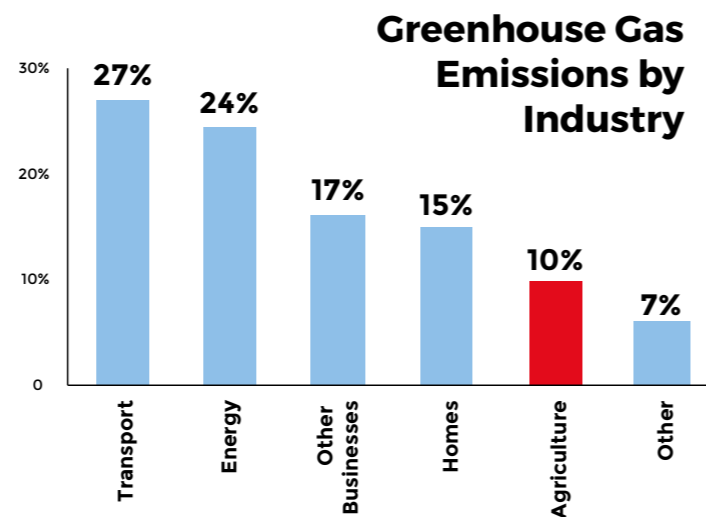
Evidence proves that human activities are having a detrimental impact on the climate. Extreme weather events support scientific predictions that rising temperatures will lead to an increase in frequency of droughts, floods, hurricanes or other damaging events. This has a profound impact on the farming calendar, with many businesses adjusting farming practices to cope.

While many recognise the central role agriculture plays in maintaining our countryside, preserving local culture, traditions and the Welsh language, misconceptions regarding the relationship between food production and the environment continue to be promoted by organisations and the media, regurgitating tired, outdated and unscientific anti-farming programming.

The flood of misleading media reports may have led many to believe that UK agriculture, and livestock farming in particular, is responsible for the majority of UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. However, figures show agriculture only contributes 10% of total UK emissions, (5.6% of which is with methane from livestock). This compares with 27% from transport, 24% from energy supply, 17% from other businesses and 15% from homes.

APPROX 410 MILLION
TONNES OF CARBON IS
CURRENTLY STORED IN
WELSH SOILS

410m
tonnes



Misinformation about agriculture, and livestock farming's contribution to climate change, has triggered a move by some UK and global consumers to make dietary and behavioural changes that are damaging to our climate and ecosystems, and action needs to be taken to correct these false beliefs.

Part of the endless stream of misinformation involves a desire to replace rural communities with an abandoned 'rewilded' landscape. Not only would this have catastrophic impacts on our semi-natural environment, but it would also fire the starting gun on the demise of our rural economies. While the negative impacts of agriculture must be acknowledged, so too must the positive impacts and the degree to which habitats and species have come to partly or fully rely on agriculture. Evidence shows that 'rewilding' can, and does, have negative impacts on species and ecosystems.

Additionally the supposed economic benefits of rewilded areas, where tourism must replace agriculture, is highly questionable and there is very little evidence to support it.

Despite all of the evidence demonstrating the issues with rewilding, these ideas continue to gain political purchase amongst some – particularly where misinformation reinforces existing prejudices.

Grazing livestock are critical to ecosystems. They help to maintain healthy soil structure

and fertility, aid in protecting and maintaining species diversity and are an effective and constant carbon sink. It is estimated that approximately 410 million tonnes of carbon is currently stored in Welsh soils.

Notwithstanding this, agricultural industries still have a duty to do more to reduce their carbon footprints, not only in how food is produced, but also through further mitigation and climate recovery actions.

One key role played by our agricultural industry in recent decades has been in renewable energy production. Between 1990 and 2017 greenhouse gas emissions from energy supply fell by 60%, with renewable energy produced on farmland playing a central role in this reduction.

Critical to this positive impact were UK Government initiatives which allowed investment in on-farm renewable energy production, such as the Feed in Tariffs introduced in 2010. These were instrumental in more than doubling renewable energy production in Wales between 2010 and 2017.

Changes to policies, and abandoning the Feed in Tariffs, have led to a significant slow down in on-farm renewable energy production. While investments by some

multinational companies in renewables continue, they do not bring the social and environmental benefits as smaller scale private initiatives.

Appropriate recognition of the role agriculture plays in providing food, protecting the environment and negating climate change, shows farming has a central role to play in helping the UK rise to climate emergency.



FUW KEY ASKS



1

Tackle the grid capacity deficit to enable on-farm renewable energy projects.

2

Recognise food production as a national strategic asset and halt the use of productive agricultural land to meet tree planting targets.

3

Ensure environmental targets do not result in unfair competition and increased imports.

4

Properly reward and compensate farmers for delivering environmental and public goods.

REFORM PUBLIC PROCUREMENT and Supply Chains



The decision to leave the EU was supposed to allow primary producers to capitalise on new domestic procurement policies where public bodies led by example and supported local Welsh and UK food. However, despite this new freedom the UK remains stubbornly behind other nations on local procurement.

Research demonstrating the wider benefits of local procurement is clear. Data from the New Economics Foundation has shown that every £1 spent on seasonal, local ingredients, generates £1.19 of economic activity. Each year, £2.4bn is spent by Government bodies on food but there remain significant numbers who fail to support British agriculture, choosing instead to use produce from countries which often fail to meet the UK's high production standards.

A shift-change in the procurement process is required to distinguish between 'cheapest' and 'best value', to properly recognising that responsible procurement can bring a range of benefits to wider society.

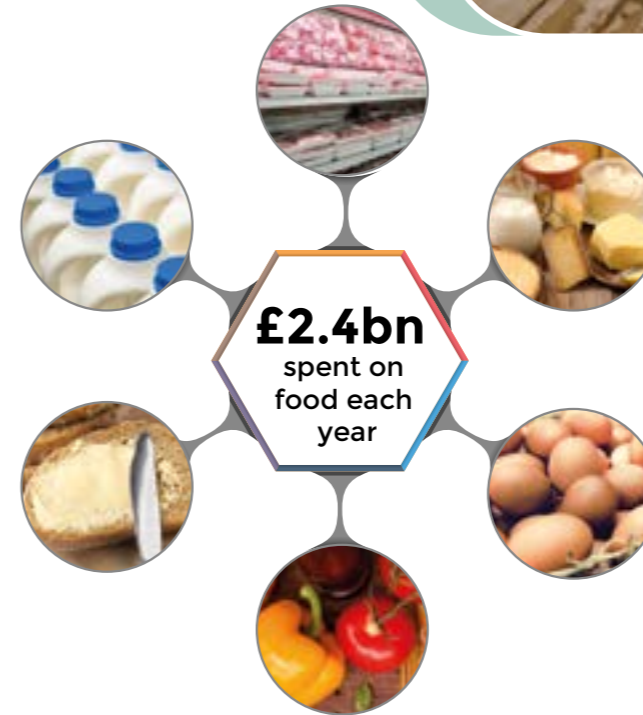
A fair and well functioning supply chain creates equality and transparency, and has the central objective of ensuring that consumers pay appropriate prices for food, while farmers, food producers and distributors, get fair payments for their produce.

FOR EVERY £1 SPENT ON SEASONAL, LOCAL INGREDIENTS, £1.19 OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IS GENERATED



Within the UK, successive changes to policies which govern competition within supply chains have allowed large companies to dominate in a way that can be grossly detrimental to primary producers. When small businesses participate in the supply chain process, it brings benefits in local employment, combating supply chain imbalances, and raising awareness and confidence in UK produce.

Whilst the FUW fully supports the role of the Groceries Adjudicator, there remains continued justification for expanding their powers and significant grounds for changes to competition rules within the UK.



FUW KEY ASKS



- 1 Introduce procurement policies that prioritise public body support for Welsh and British businesses.
- 2 Encourage smaller businesses to join the procurement tender process.
- 3 Introduce policies that promote a more transparent supply chain
- 4 Expand the powers of the Groceries Adjudicator to address wider unfair supply chain practices and review UK competition rules.



PROTECT OUR LIVESTOCK

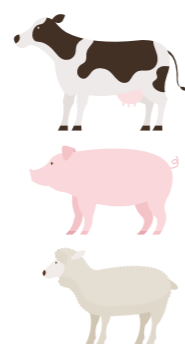
and High Welfare Standards

Welsh farming should be proud of its consistently high standards of animal health and welfare. Despite increasing costs for public and animal health measures, legislative bureaucracy and low profits, primary producers continue to provide some of the highest standards in the world.

Many health and welfare measures imposed on primary producers are disproportionate, inefficient and unsupported by current scientific evidence. The current supply chain offers little reward for higher welfare produce and current evidence suggests consumers are highly influenced by other factors such as price. To combat this, we believe Governments must increase consumer confidence by promoting the hard work and dedication of our primary producers and correct malicious and uneducated misinformation.

The high costs of adhering to health and welfare legislation should be minimised and any moves towards a cost-sharing agenda, which would further undermine the viability of farms, must be opposed.

Some of the most significant costs to industry and Government have resulted from exotic diseases, introduced into the farmed environment in ways beyond farmers control – Foot and Mouth disease being the most notable example. The recent identification of Bluetongue Virus Serotype 3 (BTV3) in a non-



6.5M

ANIMALS SLAUGHTERED DURING THE 7 MONTH FOOT AND MOUTH EPIDEMIC

imported animal in England demonstrates the robust nature of the UK's disease surveillance network and the continued need for cross-border disease surveillance protocols.

Devolved nations can improve collaboration to improve animal health across the UK. As the industry becomes more open and transparent on issues such as risk-based trading and the provision of health information at the point of sale, a recognition of devolved responsibilities and the need for joined-up approaches is essential.



Livestock attacks 2013-2017



£250,000 ESTIMATED COST TO FARMING BUSINESSES

1700

incidents of livestock worrying and attacks

1928

animals killed during these incidents

1614

animals injured during these incidents

11%

repeat offenders

A serious issue for animal health and welfare are dog attacks on livestock. Rural crime force data on dog attacks on livestock show that this continues to be a persistent economic and welfare issue. In the 5 year period between 2013 and 2017, data from 5 forces across England and Wales reported over 1700 incidents of livestock worrying and attacks. During these incidents, 1928 animals were killed, and 1614 injured with an estimated cost to farming businesses of around £250,000. What's worse, is that 11% of the incidents involved repeat offenders. These statistics not only illustrate the harm caused to livestock, but also the significant emotional blow taken by livestock keepers who suffer these attacks.

Despite the statistics, the FUW believes the data represents a fraction of the losses experienced by primary producers. Currently, the Home Office does not require the recording of statistics on livestock attacks, this means this crime is significantly under-recorded. The inability to officially monitor the extent of the issue, coupled with a lack of police powers to bring offenders to justice, has eroded confidence within the industry.



The current laws relating to dog attacks on livestock are antiquated and unfit for purpose, and do not reflect the significant welfare, emotional and financial impacts of this serious crime. It also does not provide the investigative or enforcement powers required to identify problem dogs, stop offences and provide full compensation to livestock keepers.

Alongside other organisations, the FUW is campaigning for a significant strengthening of legislation to improve the health and welfare of both sheep and dogs. Recently, the Government made a U-Turn on the UK Kept Animals Bill meaning a loss of a more workable replacement for current legislation.

BTB CATTLE CONTROLS IN WALES HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE STRICTEST IN THE WORLD FOR MORE THAN A DECADE



This leaves primary producers unprotected, vulnerable and without a substantive legal framework to deter offenders.

Bovine TB (bTB) is of course one of the largest animal health and welfare issues we face in

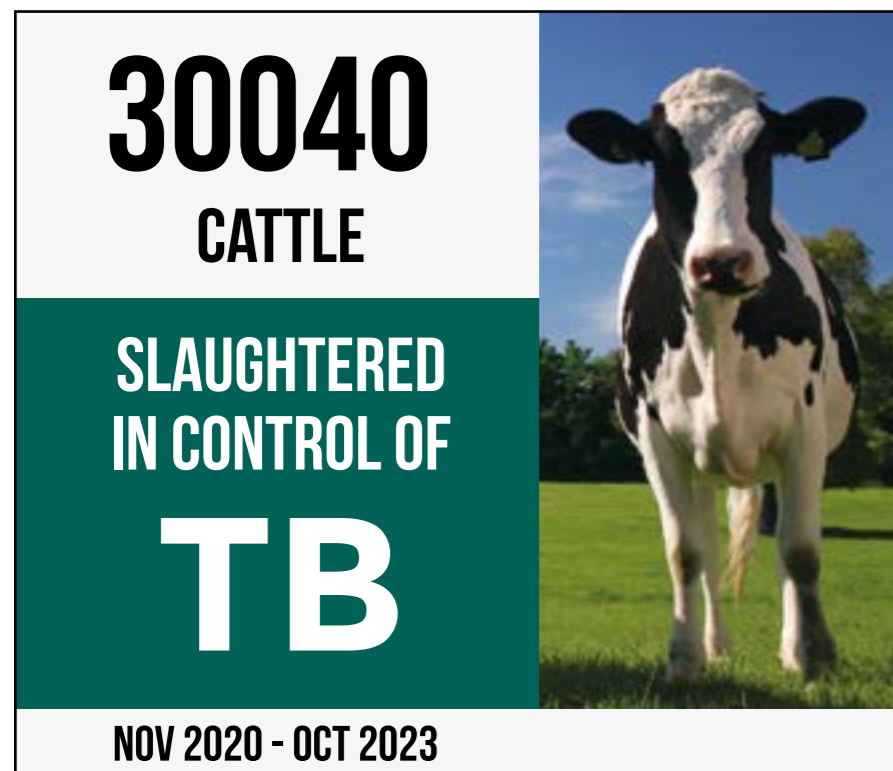
Wales. BTB policies implemented in England continue to have a significant impact on Wales and affect the UK wide disease status. In many regions across England and Wales, bTB levels continue to far exceed the legal level to be declared 'TB free', something that could have a catastrophic impact on negotiating international trade deals.

In the twelve months to the end of September 2023, 9669 Welsh cattle were slaughtered due to bTB. Regional data over the same 12 month time period remains variable; with a rise in the number of cattle slaughtered in 3 out of the 5 bTB Areas in Wales. The highest reported increase was in the Low TB Area, where the number of cattle slaughtered rose by over 97% in 2023 compared with 2022 despite bTB cattle controls in Wales being some of the strictest in the World for more than a decade.



and that abandoning this strategy to eradicate bTB would go wholeheartedly against improving the evidence base and protecting livestock against the disease.

As the culling of badgers continues to be the focus of political debate, the tens of thousands of cattle slaughtered each year and strict cattle movement controls attract far less attention. We believe the Badger Act must be revoked and new legislation introduced to afford badgers proportionate protection, while ensuring badgers can be controlled to prevent disease in cattle.



Despite differing scientific opinions regarding badger culling, the presence of bTB in badgers is recognised by all credible scientists as a major obstacle to disease eradication. Despite the evidence, the UK and Welsh Governments continue to pursue notably different TB eradication strategies; with the Welsh Government currently 'forbidding' badger culling under all and any circumstances.

Given the significant investments made in England, the FUW believes it should continue under any future Government,

FUW KEY ASKS



- 1 Ensure animal health and welfare compliance costs are proportionate, and do not disadvantage Welsh producers.
- 2 Develop the disease surveillance networks with EU Member States and protect the UK scanning surveillance budget.
- 3 Bring into law that all dogs should be kept on a lead in fields near or adjacent to livestock.
- 4 Overhaul bTB policies and programmes to ensure they are fit-for-purpose.
- 5 Revoke the Badger Act to allow badger control to prevent bTB in cattle





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This Manifesto reflects the priorities of FUW Members as of January 2024.
We will revise this document as necessary during the course of 2024.